

2 Politics of
Heroin in SE Asia

P-McCoy, A. Read

O.A. 4.01 Drug Traffic

BOOKS

THE POLITICS OF HEROIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, by Alfred W. McCoy, with Cathleen B. Read and Leonard P. Adams II (Harper & Row). The authors say that the highlands of Southeast Asia are the most productive opium-poppy area in the world, and the source—via local crooks and politicians, the Chinese equivalent of the Mafia, the Corsican equivalent of the Mafia, and the Mafia itself—of most of the heroin that comes into the United States; they add that the great increase in poppy-growing and heroin manufacture is the result of American policy, especially the misbehavior of the C.I.A. The book causes one to ponder both its reliability and its message. It contains allegations—such as that So-and-So heads the heroin trade in the United States—of a kind that make good reading but are rarely proved in courts of law. The authors' mention of the Marshall Plan suggests that they have fallen hard for the fad of blaming everything wrong with the world on American foreign policy since the Second World War. The introduction of irrelevancies and of statements first offered as probabilities and then considered facts are irritating, too. Yet, on the other hand, the executive branch of this government appears to have forgotten that it is not allowed to keep secrets from the American people, and every revelation of governmental secrecy has created a justifiable suspicion. A reader may very well feel that there is something to the authors' story. Even if only a few accusations are true, that could make the worst of the Harding Administration's scandals look rather quaint.